

Committee on Student Affairs

Minutes of the 79th Meeting of the Committee on Student Affairs held on 23 March 2026 at 2:30 pm at Room 5021, Academic Building (mixed-mode).

Present	:	Prof Stanley Lau (Chair), Prof Tat Koon Koh, Prof Kun Xu,
		Prof Kam Wing Siu, Prof Frederick Tsz-Ho Fong, Prof Kevin Tam,
		Prof Zhe Wang, Prof. Alex He, Ms Cheuk Hang Yu,
		Ms Hiu Tung Tsoi, Mr Yash Mangesh Relekar,
		Prof Pak Wo Leung (Member and Secretary)
Apologies	:	Mr Jiawei Hu, Ms Qiyao Ma
Resources Person	:	Dr Silver Chan, Head of Counseling & Wellness
		Mr Ricky Yeung, Head of Sports Development
		Ms Christawelle Quinn Sabanal Elloso, Marketing Head of Locopolis
In Attendance	:	Ms Karina Shum

Confirmation of Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

1. The minutes of the 78th Meeting of the Committee on Student Affairs were confirmed, and there were no matters arising.

Welcome of New Member

2. The Chair welcomed the new members of the Committee on Students Affairs.

Report on Counseling and Wellness Support

3. Dr Silver Chan presented a report on the counseling and wellness support provided by the Counseling & Wellness Center (C&W) for all HKUST students. She highlighted that her team comprised 26 colleagues, including 10 counselors and 1 psychiatric nurse. She pointed out the global rise in anxiety and depression, which were also prevalent mental health issues among secondary students in Hong Kong. At HKUST, a total of 2,350 client records were established in AY2024-25. Over the past 12 years, there had been a consistent increase in students utilizing counseling services, with non-local students, primarily from Chinese Mainland, making up half of those seeking help. Starting in Spring 2025-26, the Counseling & Wellness Center (C&W) would collaborate with an external counseling service to provide

multilingual support in 15 languages for students who were not proficient in Cantonese. Additionally, approximately 200 calls were received through the 24/7 HEARing hotline, with 55% of these occurring in the evenings or at midnight, indicating a continued necessity for this service. Dr Silver Chan also noted that all UGC-funded universities had observed a significant demand for mental health support, especially among Generation Z, prompting each university to enhance their facilities and manpower.

4. Prof Kevin Tam questioned whether the manpower was adequate to support the student population. Dr Silver Chan responded that the team continued to expand and that the counselor-to-student ratio was comparable to that of HKU and CUHK. She noted that while both HKU and CUHK had clinical psychologists and psychiatrists on their counseling teams to address more severe cases, HKUST referred such cases to TKO Hospital. The University also provided subsidies for students to consult private psychiatrists while they awaited appointments through the Hospital Authority.
5. Prof Tat Koon Koh asked if the SEN team had encountered students wishing to drop courses without certification for mental health reasons. Dr Silver Chan indicated that approximately 10-20% of such late drop requests were deemed unjustified. Prof Pakwo Leung added that course drop requests were academic matters that required approval from the school, and the SEN team did not offer recommendations in these cases. Prof Tat Koon Koh suggested that it might be beneficial for the SEN team to conduct a preliminary screening before forwarding cases to the school. Prof Pakwo emphasized that neither the SEN team nor the psychologists/psychiatrists could make definitive decisions on academic issues, although the SEN team could provide insights on cases they had monitored over time, rather than on new cases.
6. Prof Kevin Tam inquired about the number of students with SEN receiving actual academic accommodation, which varied depending on the course instructor. Dr Silver Chan explained that the SEN team would follow up on more complex cases to ensure that accommodation requests were fully supported by course instructors. Given the high volume of requests from students with SEN, it was not feasible to review every individual case, but the team was considering measures to enhance support and oversight for these requests.
7. Prof Tat Koon Koh asked about statistics on the number of students receiving wellness support at sister institutions. He asked whether the increasing trend of mental health issues among students was specific to HKUST or reflective of broader generational trends. Dr Silver Chan affirmed that it was indeed a global issue, prompting all sister institutions to step up their resources and facilities in response.
8. Prof Kevin Tam noted the assumption that mental health issues might correlate with the design of academic curricula and policies. Prof. Pakwo Leung replied that there was no scientific evidence to support a direct correlation between academic stress and mental health

issues. He added that while lower grades could impact students' happiness, they did not necessarily lead to mental health problems. The emphasis should instead be on helping students manage academic stress and find ways to relax.

(Dr Silver Chan was excused from the meeting. Mr Ricky Yeung joined.)

Report on Sports Development

9. Mr Ricky Yeung delivered a report on the four service areas managed by the sports development team, which are Sports Facilities Management, Sports Skills Classes and Water Sports Programs, Competition Education and the Provision of Sports Tutorial and Event Management Services. He noted that current sports facilities were insufficient for all eligible users, as some were reserved for non-sports purposes and did not meet the standards necessary for competition education due to the lack of spectator systems. Throughout the year, a diverse range of sports skills classes was offered to 4,200 students, including UG students from Years 1 to 4 and PG students. To enhance competition education, the team organized intramural sports competitions at HKUST, allowing students to form departmental teams to compete. Additionally, they provided funding and coaching support to university teams and student-athletes participating in inter-varsity competitions through the sports team assistance scheme. Mr Ricky Yeung also reported that the sports tutorial and event management service scheme was designed to train sports leaders to become sports tutors and event facilitators, offering both in-house tutorials and event management services, as well as sports community service.
10. Prof Kevin Tam inquired about the limitations on using funding provided by UGC to the school/department through the Student-Athlete Learning Support and Admission Scheme (SALSA). He also asked how this funding would be utilized. Mr Ricky Yeung shared that the academic advisor had decided to allocate the funding for hiring external tutors and organizing remedial classes. Prof Kevin Tam further asked about the academic performance of our student-athletes. Mr Ricky Yeung shared his observations that our student-athletes tended to be highly capable and generally did not require much tutoring support. Instead, they often needed special approval for leave applications or arrangements for make-up examinations.
11. Prof Zhe Wang suggested organizing sports competition with the HKUST (GZ) campus. Mr Ricky Yeung shared that there were plans to invite the HKUST (GZ) campus to visit HKUST (CWB) campus for a competition in celebration of the 35th Anniversary. A Sports Carnival with full-day competitions was also in the works.
12. Prof Stanley Lau asked about plans to offer scuba diving course. Mr Ricky Yeung replied that student interest in scuba diving had declined after social unrest, and the equipment had become malfunctioning. If budget and space permitted, he planned to repair the equipment to resume scuba diving activities along the shore.

13. Prof Zhe Wang further suggested promoting the remarkable achievements of our student-athletes. Mr Ricky Yeung shared that the team had stepped up promotional efforts focusing on sports accomplishments and engagement since last year. These efforts included sending mass emails to the university community, providing broadcast links for match viewing, and creating video clips highlighting sports community services. Plans were also underway to establish a sports media team to cover major competitions.

(Mr Ricky Yeung was excused from the meeting. Ms Christawelle Quinn Sabanal Elloso joined.)

Report on Planning and Activities from Locopolis

14. Ms Christawelle Quinn Sabanal Elloso provided an overview of Locopolis, including its objectives, past and upcoming activity plans, and the challenges encountered along the way.
15. Prof Tat Koon Koh suggested that Locopolis provided more specific requirements to the school for connecting with alumni from ethnically diverse backgrounds, enabling the school to facilitate appropriate connections with these alumni.
16. Prof Stanley Lau inquired about the diversity of Locopolis members. Ms Christawelle Quinn Sabanal Elloso responded that the majority of members were from Southeast Asia and Chinese Mainland.
17. Prof Kun Xu inquired about the potential for funding support from the Division of Social Sciences. Ms Christawelle Quinn Sabanal Elloso clarified that Locopolis was a Department Associated Group (DAG) under the Dean of Students' Office (DSTO), so its exco members could discuss funding matters with their advisor from DSTO. Prof Kevin Tam noted the relevance between Locopolis and the courses offered by the Division of Social Sciences, particularly those focusing on Hong Kong society and local culture. He recommended that Locopolis promote its activities to students from the Division of Social Sciences and consider initiating collaborations with them. He could help connect Locopolis with faculty members from the division if needed.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm.